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Three Things



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Chapter 1 by Rowan Byrne

Name three things you love. Simple right?

Three things. A nice small number.

Love. A feeling of strong affection.

Jini had thought the assignment would be easy, so had the rest of his class, and perhaps they did find it easy, but the young boy found himself sat, staring down at a piece of paper and wondering what he should put.

Love.

Did such a thing even exist?

Of course, one could feel strong affection for something, and according to the dictionary at least, that was the definition of love but Jini didn't think that was quite accurate. After all, one could feel a strong affection for just about anything. It didn't mean you loved it, love was stronger wasn't it? That was what the workers at his Home had always told him

The Nuns of Calar had always told him that love was a deep and stirring emotion that made you do things for people that you wouldn't otherwise do. You liked it.

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You didn't love it.

Well it was mainly Sistr Ruth who said that - she also liked to remind Jini and the other orphans that no one loved them either. After all, were they loved they would be with a warm family, in a warm home, not in a dirty Home for the Lost in Northern Dowl, where it was the opposite of warm in every way. Jini knew that love was in short supply here. A soft sigh left the dark eyed boy and he let his pencil fall to the side, leaning against the gritty stone wall of his bedroom.

What did he love then? It would be easy to write down just anything (I love food, I love sleep, I love sitting by the fire) but would it be the truth? There was no one at the Home he felt particularly close to and he had few to no possession's of his own. What did a boy with no friends, no family, and no material wealth love?

Himself?

Chapter 2 by PENELOPE MILLER



Looking at them from the outside, Mari's family was picture perfect. But looking from within, you see the flaws that make up each of them... A mother who was never home, a brother who stole every penny that she earned to buy drugs, and a father who... she would rather not think about.

Her English class had assigned a project that should have been simple, but might as well have been impossible.

"Name three things you love class. It will be simple." The teacher had yelled over the bell ringing, ignorant the conflict she was creating inside Mari. It should have been simple... should she say she was thankful for her family, and just not go into details? Should she make up some story about how they went on picnics once a month, like the Smith family? Maybe she could get away with not listing any of her family, and list some things in nature, or something far, far in the past? The dictionary had no idea how wrong it was with its definition. Love isn't just a strong feeling, love is Mari didn't know. Love is feeling safe when you go to sleep? Love is feeling comfort when people are near? Feeling like you can talk without endangering your family's carefully

but illusion of perfection?

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Boys were majestic unicorns sent from hell.
They had ways of getting inside your mind and messing with it.

Chapter 4 by Faye Lynch



Brook was a girl who had a family. She had a life. She had happiness. She saw beauty in everything. She loved each living creature. She loved the flowers and trees. Long books on cold nights. Fireworks during the holidays. She loved learning. She loved teaching. She loved walking through the forest in the rain in her favorite yellow raincoat.

That was before though.

Before she'd been violated. Before her purity had been destroyed by none other than her father. She never told anyone, but inside, she felt dead. She didn't think she could ever feel love again.

Her mother didn't need to ask. She knew because she'd been forced into sex by her husband countless times.

Her mother confronted Brook only to tell her to keep it quiet. Not to tell. To pretend it never happened.

But she couldn't let go. It haunted her. She felt abandoned by her mother and no one else understood. She couldn't just forget.

She ached inside, knowing she had to write about love. A feeling she'd let go of only months before. A feeling that could only feel like a dream. Like a fairytale.

She clutched her pen as she began to write.

1. I love

She sat there looking at those words. She felt at a blank. She wanted a word to just appear in her head. Something. Anything she remotely loved. Anything.

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1. I love the way Jini looks at the other boys when they are looking

2. I love when Mari smiles

3. I love to imagine my father being over powered and raped, just like he did to me.

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She knew she couldn't turn this in. She didn't even know if she really "loved" those things, but they were things that at certain times, that didn't make her feel numb. Though, there were times those things made her feel even worse.

She didn't know what to write truthfully, so as usual, she decided to lie.

1. I love when my mom takes me to the bookstore and then get a warm coffee or hot chocolate in the winter.
2. I love to work with my dad on special building projects we come up with together.
3. I love walking to my house from school in the fall and get showered by the crunchy leaves all the way home.

She never lost her imagination despite everything though.

Chapter 5 by Amelia Rose



Eli was sitting at his desk at home. He'd just finished his science homework, and now all he needed to do was his english. God, how he loathed the subject. Eli could hardly make it through a few paragraphs of reading before he zoned out. Something in his brain wouldn't cooperate. He had learned to simply not pay attention in class and let himself fail. His parents weren't too happy, but when was a time that they were?

Eli sighed, examining the question the teacher had assigned the class.

Three things he loved.

He knew what he loved, but none of the three things were what anyone would expect of him.
He knew what people would expect him to love.

Football, his girlfriend, and his bright red sports car.

They would never guess that he loved to draw.

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stars.

The people who knew Eli did not really know him.

They did not know him at all.

The only person who really knew Eli Scott was Jeni Cooper, the boy who was just as lost as he was, who unknowingly had stolen Eli's heart.

Chapter 6 by NicestPancake



"Three things you love."

The statement seems simple enough at first glance. But thinking about it a little more, Lauren ran into some problems. 'Love'. At its base, she thinks, it must be when mommy sings her 'Desperado' before she falls asleep, or when mommy yelled at her when she got lost in the neighborhood. Or maybe it's what she feels when she stares at her baby brother's oh-so-blue eyes. The eyes that at first glance, match her own, only to take a second look, and realize hers are teal.

' *What is 'love'?*' Lauren thinks to herself, as she stares out at the grass. Suddenly, she gets an idea and raises her hand. The teacher looks up, to stare at teal eyes filled with confusion and intrigue.

"Yes, Lauren?"

"What's love?"

The room fills with snickers and chortles, and her eyes dull. "Nevermind, it was a stupid question." She murmurs as if she had lost interest. She is in la-la land when there's a tap on her shoulder. She looks to her left to see Hannah staring at her humorously. She didn't really like Hannah, but it was better than nothing.

"Why do you care what love is," Hannah giggles out, "you'll never experience true love!"

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Lauren sighs and looks back at the worksheet. Despite the harsh comment, Lauren can already feel the anger wash into s... probably has had a bad day.' The three little boxes where you're supposed to draw what you love are, sadly, blank. For a

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moment, Lauren swears that she sees a picture there. She absent-mindedly doodles on the page, pointedly avoiding the boxes.

' *If love's so important, why is it so hard to define?*' She asks herself. She, by definition, loves her parents, and her friends. By definition, she loves drawing and rainbows and video games. By definition, she loves a lot of things.

She loves so much it's impossible for her to define what love is, and somewhere in her tiny, ten-year-old brain, she's terrified of that.

Chapter 7 by Queenie



Clare sighed when she saw the worksheet. It was the same, dumb stuff.

"What are three things I, Clare, love?" Clare said sarcastically.

Love? Clare paused, thinking aloud, "what *do* I love?"

Perfection. Clare loved perfection. She loved Lauren and the way she could put her whole heart into loving something that wasn't even worth it.

She loved the boys who could never love her back, because they only had eyes for each other, the boys who couldn't tell each other how they feel for fear of being caught and being put in a place of danger and ridicule. *Perfect.*

She loved the girl who hid her tears so no one could see that she wasn't strong, that she wasn't okay, that she wasn't whole and *perfect*, when in reality, she was more strong than her own mother, more perfect than the girl who loved her. *Perfect.*

She loved the girl who came out of a song, the girl who kept her family together because she did really love them, the girl who gave a smile wholly and freely, because that was all she had to give. *Perfect.*

They were all beautiful and perfect and Clare loved them, because she had no one else to put

those feelings into. She lived with her adult brother in a tiny apartment because their parents divorced and didn't want to live with them. She had to be strong and brave and care

Clare was startled to find herself breathing, and wrote those things down onto her paper.

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The next day, she gave the teacher her paper, sat down in her seat, waved to Lauren through the open door as she went down the hall to class, and looked around at her classmates that she watched so closely.

Jini was glancing at Eli, who was drawing a quick sketch of Jini.

Mari reading a book with the title "Harry Potter" '*I guess she can relate to that...*' Clare thought absently. She looked around at Brook, who's eyes were red rimmed and tired looking. Clare sighed for them, all their sadness and pain, and looked back to the front before any of them saw that she knew their truths.

Chapter 8 by Amelia Rose



The teacher was silent as she stared out at her class.

She didn't have the average english class, and she knew it. Yet, she also knew that average wasn't real. Each person in each class she took was an individual, filled with unique thoughts, feelings and emotions.

She didn't know details, of course. She didn't know that the quiet boy in the corner, Jini, snuck out in the early hours of the morning to meet the jock, Eli, who snickered in the front row. She didn't know that the girl with the baggy clothes, Mari, hiding at the side of the class was worried her family would fall apart. She couldn't see the looks that passed between her and the other nearby, a modest girl named Brook who wore her hair out to hide a thin scar under her cheek. She didn't know that the girl with the rainbow backpack in the front row, Lauren, was questioning whether anyone would ever love her. She couldn't see the girl who *did* love Lauren, sitting a few seats over, looking at everything and nothing in particular.

The teacher didn't know any of that.

She also didn't know what was in the future for these kids. She didn't know what they would grow up to become. She didn't know even whether they would graduate or not. She had no idea.

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emotion. She knew that the kids in this room had deep passions, and deep loves.

Slowly, she put the papers down on her desk, and stood. The class was working on a worksheet she had given them to do while she graded, but they all stopped and looked up when she cleared her throat.

"When I was your age, I learnt a great deal about love," she paused, her eyes lingering on the dark haired boy in the corner, "and loss. Since then, I've learnt a lot more. And do you want me to tell you the three things about love that I have learnt?"

There were a couple of nods around the class, and she took a deep breath, before picking up a marker and writing three dot points on the white board.

"One. Do what you love, love what you do."

She wrote it up before turning to the class again. "Take pride in what you enjoy. Don't spend your life pretending you are someone you're not. Do what you *love*. Only then will you love what you do."

She turned around again, and started writing out the second point.

"Two. Love your neighbour as yourself."

She turned again once she finished writing, and spoke to the class. "Now, I don't care what religion any of you take. I don't care if you have ever read a single verse of the bible. But this is one of the most important lessons you will ever learn. Be *kind*. Be *compassionate*. Be *loving*, to everyone. And also, *love yourself*. Love your neighbour as yourself."

Her words seemed to seep into each persons mind, when she stopped. She had everyone's attention. Slowly, she turned, and began to write her last point.

"Three. Let your love show."

She put down the white board marker and turned.

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don't hide it. Let it out.

She took a deep breath and clasped her hands.

"Someone asked yesterday, what is love?" She said, her eyes finding Lauren's. "Well, to that, I say this. Love is what you make of it."

Love is what you make of it.

the end

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